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AUTHOR Ruin, Olof; Myrman, Yngve
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ABSTRACT

A political science research project entitled "Higher Education: political and administrative aspects" incorporates two projects focusing particularly on the reform of higher education in Sweden. One of these projects, concerning the genesis of the reform, has been described in a previous bulletin. The other project described here is concerned with the practical implementation of the reform of higher education. Focus is on problems of values and political and administrative processes. This report provides a general account of traditions of reform in Swedish education policy, a concise description of higher education in Sweden during the past decade seen in an international perspective, and basic information concerning the new system of higher education and the immediate reactions to the reform legislation passed in May 1975. The period between 1975 and 1977 is discussed with emphasis on how the reform was carried out. (LBH)

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CURRENT PROJECT

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PROJECT TITLE: U 68 - A study in the implementation of the Swedish reform of higher education

IN PROGRESS AT: The Department of Political Science, University of Stockholm, S-106 91 Stockholm. Phone: 08/150160

SCIENTIFIC LEADER: Professor Olof Ruin

PROJECT LEADER: Yngve Myrman, Ph.D.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The political science research project entitled "Higher education: political and administrative aspects" incorporates two projects focussing particularly on the reform of higher education in Sweden. One of these projects, concerning the genesis of the reform, has been described in R&D for Higher Education 1977:5. The other project, described here, is concerned with the practical implementation of the reform of higher education. This study is above all aimed at a detailed investigation of the practical implementation of the reform. An investigation of this kind is justifiable on the grounds that it can provide

a) a contribution towards the evaluation of the reform,

b) knowledge, which to a great extent is lacking at present, concerning the process whereby

Universitets- och högskoleämbetet P.O. Box 16334 S-103 26 Stockholm SWEDEN PHONE 08-14 10 00

general aims are translated into operational norms and routines at administrative level,

c) a point of departure for a discussion of problems relating to international research into "the politics of administration".

The main focus of attention in this investigation will be on problems of values and on political and administrative processes. Of course, the process which began with the legislation passed in May 1975 and the results emerging from that process can never be regarded as final. Many of the provisions of the new Higher Education Act on the subject of means and ends are necessarily couched in general terms. A great deal of the content of the Act was a matter of political controversy, and the degree of consensus existing at the general, overriding level may be difficult to maintain when the aims are broken down into more concrete terms. New supplementary and modificatory decisions will be taken as problems arise. It seems reasonable to observe developments for at least one year after the reform comes into force, i.e. until mid-1978, and for certain facilities to be provided for the observation of spectacultar events occurring during the period covered by the analysis (until mid-1979).

STRATEGY

The investigation will be divided into three sections, corresponding to different chronological phases in the reform process:

1) Conditions attaching to the implementation of the reform.

2) The launching of the reform (May 1975 - 1st July 1977).

3) Concise analysis of the implementation process.

1. Conditions attaching to the implementation of the reform

The aim of this section is to provide a general account of traditions of reform in Swedish education policy, a concise description of higher education in Sweden during the past decade seen in an international perspective, and basic information concerning the new system of higher education and the immediate reactions to the higher education reform legislation. Education policy will be viewed in a wider context and a descriptive summary will be given of general problem complexes:

- Student intake
- Relations between universities and society

- Student activism and student unrest
- Subject traditionalism
- Educational development
- Limited economic resources for which the education sector has to compete
- University government. The trend towards centralization. The expansion of bureaucratic power. The participation question
- The changing role of the universities. Elite education - mass education. Increased vocational emphasis
- The growth of the political element

Perkins (1973), Altbach (1974), Embling (1974) and Kogan (1975) are examples of links with international research which will help to widen the frame of reference of the following account.

The report on the section "Conditions attaching to the implementation of the reform" will contain a summary of the following points:

- What changes are being demanded in higher education?
- What tensions are inherent in the policy standpoints?
- What image does the reform possess?
- What readiness exists for reform?

2. The launching of the reform

This section begins with a general description of the period between 1975 and 1977. Certain necessary basic data are presented and an outline is given of the implementation process with its myriad of formal and informal groupings.

For obvious reasons, the main investigation will have to be kept within limits. The reform of higher education is concerned mainly with undergraduate studies. Questions concerning postgraduate studies and research activities are at present being studied by the Swedish Commission on Graduate Training (FUN) which is expected to present its main report in 1977.

One obvious approach is to study the political and administrative processes whereby general aims are converted into operational norms and routines at administrative level. The content of the reform and its processing from policy document to concrete

definitions present innumerable topics of investigation. In this chapter two central reform objectives constitute points of departure in a delineating discussion, viz the broader scheme of higher education and the democratization of higher education.

A long line of subsidiary questions will be raised with reference to the following:

- Greater accessibility
- More variegated recruitment of students
- Width and differentiation of educational opportunities
- The stimulation of renewal and development ("innovative combinations")
- Overall appreciation (wider perspective, co-ordination)
- Efficiency
- Interaction between higher education and working life, basic studies and research/research training
- Close relation, smooth adjustment
- Transfer of responsibilities and powers from central to local bodies
- Co-determination

All of these subsidiary questions concern problems relating to the organization of studies, institutional organization and the planning of education content. These organizational questions are natural premises for the basic structure of the section on the launching of the reform, but certain restrictions are necessary.

The following points are being studied:

1. The organization and dimensioning of studies
   Educational programmes, individual courses and the allocation of resourses, locations

2. Institutional organization
   Unit divisions
   Programme committee organization

3. Interaction between outside world and inside world
   A balance between formal decision-making positions

4. From policy document to concrete educational content
   A case study of educational planning at local level

In this survey, questions of organizational and educational planning will be studied by tracing developments from inventory and discussion via preliminary standpoints and decisions to the final administrative definitions. Of course, attention will also be paid to the revised conditions implied by the change of Government and the Higher Education Bill. The composition of regional boards, unit boards and programme committees, i.e. the fixation and balancing of a number of formal decision-making positions in the new system of higher education, are the content concealed by the heading "Interaction between outside world and inside world".

The planning conditions of the six higher education regions differ in a number of respects. The subject field would become excessively wide-ranging if the implementation process were to be monitored with reference to all regions. In order to cover at least some of the diversity, planning work will be followed in the Stockholm, Uppsala and Umeå higher education regions. The selection is dictated by the fact that these regions provide examples of differing circumstances emanating from lockalization problems, the relationship between basic studies and postgraduate studies/research, recruitment situations, attitudes to regional boards and, perhaps, the degree of academic traditionalism.

The reform of higher education has provided an incentive for extensive educational planning. At local level a considerable amount of development work has been in progress for several terms, and very often an accumulated need for renewal has become manifest. The local study of educational planning focuses on the problem of translating guidelines and principles into concrete educational content. A study is being made of survey and development work, and close delimitation is needed here in view of the obvious risk of being engulfed by an overwhelming volume of source material. I feel it would be appropriate to confine our attention to a single arts faculty. Undoubtedly the reform of higher education will entail considerable changes within arts faculties, not least as regards educational content. In this study the field of investigation will be limited to the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stockholm. This choice is occasioned by geographical convenience and by my personal knowledge of the faculty in question.

A summary will be made of observations concerning the process whereby it is attempted to translate guidelines into concrete definitions. How is the content of the reform affected and changed? To

what extent have the ideas of wider higher education and the democratization of higher education been a guiding influence in the implementation process?

3. Concise analysis of the implementation process

Very briefly, the general purpose of this section is to compare the occasion of the legislation concerning the new system of higher education with the occasion of the inauguration of the new system on 1st July 1977. What has happened? What observations can be made in the process whereby general aims are translated into operational norms and routines? What explanatory formulae can be used? The initial academic years of the new system of higher education will provide a certain perspective, but the aim is not to evaluate this period. All the time the main focus of interest will be on the implementation process up to the inauguration of the new system of higher education.

The concise analysis will begin with a few reflections concerning "The interaction of policy - implementation bodies - target group - environmental factors" (Fielden & Lockwood 1973, Smith 1973, Häyrynen & Perho 1974, et al). This somewhat broadened post facto perspective of a general, summarising character will be followed by two more speculative perspectives: the planner's and the researcher's.

In the post facto perspective of the planner, comments will be made on the design of the planning structure, the allocation of duties between different levels, the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of functional ideas expressed, for instance, in terms of reference, and the question as to whether the process has contributed satisfactorily towards a renewal of educational organization and content in accordance with predefined intentions. Or is it possible in a post facto perspective to discern alternative planning models? (Gross, Giacquinta and Bernstein 1971).

The researcher's post facto perspective will contain a few concluding remarks concerning the research task and the way in which this type of problem should be processed.

EXECUTION

The first section, concerning the conditions attaching to the implementation of a reform, has been given a great deal of attention during the initial stage

of the study. The rough planning of this section is more or less complete, and work is at present concentrating on the organizational questions in the chapter concerning the launching of the reform. The local study of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stockholm will come in a later stage of the study, although part of the work on the collection of material will begin during the autumn of 1977.

TIMETABLE

The project started in 1976, and a final report will be presented in 1979.

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Olof Ruin
Yngve Myrman